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ABSTRACT

The activities of the reading/writing center at the University of Minnesota Technical College are described in this paper. Following a brief discussion of the background of the center and its rationale, the paper provides (1) steps in planning effective reading and writing strategies, (2) examples of reading/writing assignments, and (3) ways to obtain cooperation and support for reading/writing centers from students, faculty members, and administrators. (FL)

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READING & WRITING: A TOTAL PACKAGE FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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Reading and Writing: A Total Package for Academic Success

Reading and writing have much in common. In the WRITING PROCESS standards of good writing are taught. Using a camera as an analogy, the writer learns the mechanics of the camera and how to adjust it to take a good picture. The text itself is the photograph. It contains a certain organization and writing style and is a result of the writing process. The READING PROCESS is how the photograph is processed. An effective reader will adjust reading strategy (or processing) to the writing style in the text.

WRITING PROCESS (production) ---- TEXT ---- READING PROCESS (receiving)

The planning for the photograph or for the reading and writing process is also similar. The following steps might be used by a teacher of reading or writing to develop effective reading and writing strategies:

PLANNING

1. Writing - Pre-writing
   Reading - Surveying
2. Writing - Who is the audience?
   Reading - Is the audience general or specialized? What speed Should you go?
3. Writing - Select major ideas
   Reading - Pinpoint main ideas
   Survey
   Read for the main theme first
   Set the stage with brainstorming or guided reading
   What are the questions to ask?
4. Writing - Determine your point of view.
   Reading - Discover the author's point of view.
   What is the author's purpose?
   What is your purpose for reading this?
5. Writing - Develop a sequence or outline.
   Reading - Underline or outline the material.
   Find the topic sentence in each paragraph.
   What is the main theme of each section?
   Find the supporting details.
   Summarize the section.
   Paraphrase the terms and definitions.

With this in mind, the communications staff at the University of Minnesota Technical College tried to coordinate their reading and writing instruction for a total developmental program for students. Once a week, for 10 weeks, all composition students come to the Reading Center for practice in reading comprehension from textbooks with timed selections or from the EDL Controlled Reader. Several sessions are devoted entirely to finding the main ideas and inferences in reading and writing. Two sessions are spent in the library with reading and writing staff to prepare to write research papers. Information gathering from the library, taking notes, and documentation with bibliographical entries are covered. A Writing Center is also located in a room off the reading lab. During certain hours of the day, faculty are available for help with writing assignments. What has resulted in this interfacing of the two disciplines is a change of attitude among the staff. The reading instructors are incorporating writing as part of the class lesson and the writing instructors are using more reading activities as models for good writing. It is common practice now to have students read their writing to each other in groups for the purpose of correcting errors of grammar and syntax. The following is a list of some of the reading/writing assignments that have been given.

Examples of Reading/Writing Assignments

Determine paragraph shape from a writing assignment.

Predict test questions from lecture notes.

Write out practice tests for courses using your notes.

Analyze tests when they come back in essay form.

Assign research papers. (information gathering from library, taking notes, documentation with bibliography entries)

Summarize class notes.

Paraphrase terms and definitions from textbooks.

Predict essay questions for a course and write them out.

Write an essay on what you think your most pressing study problem is.

Write an essay on test anxiety.

Analyze student essays for grammar and punctuation.

Use study guides for textbooks.

Write letters to appropriate people as outgrowth of class discussions.

Help and encourage content faculty to give combined assignments.

Examples:

How would election of the major presidential candidates affect the hospitality industry?

Go to a local candidate debate. Take notes. Analyze which candidate won.

Write a letter to the agriculture extension office to get information on which crop to plant this spring.

What is the incidence of child abuse in this county? Write to the appropriate people.

Make a resume for your chosen career.

Take-home exams of all types.

Have students write essays analyzing their instructors as to voice clues, body clues, word clues used in lecture.

Have students make marginal notes when underlining.

Have students collect data on a subject and write their conclusions.

Have students conduct interviews and write them up.

Have student evaluate course, course materials, and teaching methods in written form.

To obtain continued cooperation and support from faculty, students, and administrators, the communications staff set up ways to become visible on campus. Suggestions follow:

Ways to Obtain Cooperation & Support for Reading/Writing Centers

From Students:

Publicity through student newspapers

Interviews about the Center on campus radio/TV station

Posters, flyers on campus and in student registration packets

Peer Tutor Program in the Center; recruit student leaders and athletes

Set up a study file with tests, assignments, and study aids. Keep it in the Reading-Learning Center.

Initiate class projects (journalism-feature story, interior decoration-remodeling, restaurant management-cater food for workshop)

Initiate club projects (Horticulrue Club-decorate center, Home & Family Services Club-community book fair, Student Senate-tutor training, Art Club-bulletin boards, displays

From Faculty & Administration:

Faculty in-service on Center programs and the reading & writing process

Videotape class lectures to use in note taking in the Center

Present the program at orientation sessions, registration sessions, parents sessions

Cooperate with Student Affairs & counselors in retention studies

Initiate faculty and administration evaluation of your program

Offer to help faculty in writing grants for reading and writing across the curriculum

Offer to proofread faculty grant proposals

Offer to do readabilities on faculty textbooks used

Give mini-sessions in content area classes: test-taking, writing essays, reading professional journals, making annotated bibliographies, study skills, reading textbooks, taking notes, writing papers, using the library

Contacting faculty advisors when students get deficiency slips and offering your help

For Both:

Offer a speed reading/writing course for faculty and students

Have faculty and students evaluate your program periodically

Offer reading and writing tests for diagnosis and placement of students

Publicize through posters, flyers

Develop a promotional audio-visual series to publicize your program: make it useful for admissions, counselors, classroom, orientations

The commitment to reading and writing as an integrated process began by individual teachers using reading selections as the motivation for writing assignments and writing assignments as the motivation for reading assignments. A reading/writing center grew out of it where staff worked together in their individual courses. And along with this came the awareness of the center and its services by soliciting student, faculty and administration support.

For more information on the program contact: Gretchen Starks, Reading Center, University of Minnesota Technical College, Crookston, MN 56716.

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STUDENT TEXTBOOKS

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- Reading for Inferences
- Reading Between the Lines
- Reading to Get the Main Point
- Literary Criticism

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